

Colleges to Start Policing Students Who Download Music

By Shaileja Mammen

Illegally downloading music and videos is common among college students, but the entertainment industry considers it theft. College officials are uncomfortable due to the increasing attention Congress is paying to this practice.

Colleges expect the Senate majority leader to enforce some provisions to prevent campus-based digital theft. With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act having been taken up by the Senate, schools anticipate that measures to prevent digital theft will be attached to new legislation.

Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada has come up with a plan to prevent illegal downloading through the U.S. Department of Education. Some of the measures he has proposed include:

- annual reporting on policies related to illegal downloading.
- reviews of procedures to ensure these policies are effective.
- the implementation of a plan to prevent illegal downloading or distribution of intellectual property among peers with the help of a technology-based deterrent.
- listings of the 25 colleges and universities that have experienced the most copyright violations each year compiled by the secretary of education.

Senator Reid also announced that the measures have not been finalized and that the list may be amended.

Colleges do not seem to be concerned that such measures will likely be included in the next reauthorization bill, but the requirement for a technology-based system has caused some worry. This would translate into expenditures for colleges.

Groups lobbying against these provisions argue that it is unfair to target colleges and ignore illegal downloading occurring elsewhere. These groups also allege that examination of the proposal has been inadequate. The entertainment industry is lobbying for the amendment as it feels government intervention will be in its best interest.